

darkness of the gentle kind

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darkness of the gentle kind

by [Maven_Morozov](#)

Summary

Alina has woken in a strange room, her mind inaccessible to her. She faintly remembers her mentor, Aleksander Morozov, and she faintly remembers a mission...something that didn't go as planned. Events build upon each other, her mind layering the details of what happened, revealing the truth of Alina's desires and the actions that nearly ruined everything.

Or, a Darklina modern assassin au one shot!

Notes

This fic is written for the Darklina Secret Santa 2020 for @kkastle -- Merry Christmas Jordan! I wish you all the best this holiday & in the new year. I hope you enjoy this one-shot!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Darkness. Pure, unadulterated darkness, cloying at the tips of her mind and sending shivers across her body. The shadows feel so thick that they might as well be a caress, and she lets herself sink into them, sighing almost with relief as she loses herself completely from the light.

“Aleksander?”

She only hears a laugh in reply, a soft echoing sound that sounds near and far all at once. She wants to reach out, to grab it—if one could grab a sound—but there is nothing. Everything has disappeared, and then her world turns to a blinding white.

“I will find you.”

The first thing Alina feels when she wakes is the hard press of cold linoleum to her skin. She’s on her side, elbow locked beneath her ribs at an odd angle that’s just one degree shy from being broken. That’s what grounds her, forcing her to pry open her eyes despite the harsh glare of the artificial lights over her head— *pain* . At first, she thinks it’s because of her cramped position, and then she feels the pounding of a headache in her skull. *It’s everywhere, the pain*, she realizes.

Though it takes a moment to adjust, Alina soon can examine her surroundings from where she lies. It’s hard to stand with her wrists tied by a thick rope— *so old-fashioned*, she thinks—but she manages to do it, stumbling a few times before slumping against the wall. Her head pounds as she does, a steady *thump, thump, thump* that’s almost comforting.

Clenching her jaw, Alina roves her eyes around the room she’s locked in. There’s a floor-to-ceiling length steel door to her left, a simple rectangle with no lock or handle. *Fuck* . There’s a bucket too, for what Alina assumes is for when she needs to relieve herself. And finally, a thin chair and stick-legged table holding a tray of orange-tinted soup in a bowl, a spoon resting innocently beside it.

Other than that, nothing. She’s alone, and worst of all, she can’t remember how she got here.

It takes a moment to undo her bonds—although expertly tied, they were never too tight in the first place. She supposes, then, that whoever trapped her here does not want her to die.

Alina makes her way over to the table slowly, slumping onto the chair and taking the spoon in her hand. The past twenty-four hours are a complete blank in her mind—or at least, she hopes it has only been twenty-four hours. With no windows or way to tell the date or time, Alina has no idea. She begins to panic as the thought sinks in, nausea crawling up her esophagus. It doesn’t help that the soup (squash) is long cold at this point, and she has to push it away, despite the hunger gnawing at her insides.

Where is Aleksander? She wonders. The question has been burning inside her since she woke up on the floor with her hands tied, and only intensified as the time has passed. She feels like she’s going insane. Her mentor was there, he was *there* , at her side, what feels like seconds

ago, though it may have well been years. Without a mirror, Alina can't tell if she's grown decades older...

Well, that's ridiculous, besides. Even in her industry, there's no such thing as technology that can keep a person alive for years and erase their memory. Scoffing, Alina pushes the thought from her head, annoyed at herself for creating personal conspiracy theories.

Now, she strains her memory, searching past dusty shelves to find something she can't quite reach, something that feels familiar.

She doesn't know that it's too much for her, and soon, Alina is slumped sideways in the chair against the cool wall, chest rising and falling as she slips into an exhausted sleep.

When she wakes again, a familiar face is standing in the empty doorway where the steel rectangle used to be. He's wearing a crisp black suit tailored just perfectly to fit the slightly curving physique and slimness of his body, pale face sharp and cold in the bright fluorescents of Alina's cell-like room. His thick black hair is swept up to the side in a sophisticated manner, and his pale quartz eyes sparkle with an emotion Alina can't quite decipher, something he wants to hold close to his chest. Her own heart tugs at the sight of him.

Aleksander.

"Sun Summoner, come in!"

Alina ignores the crackling comm at her ear, one eye squeezed shut as she aims. The gunsight on her weapon is a good one, allowing her to see past the sway of leaves on trees and down into the streets below. Within moments, a person comes into view, and the gunsight makes quick note of them, highlighting their figure as they move.

Shit, that's him, Alina thinks. *That's my target.*

She was dispatched on a mission to assassinate the leader of the Merchant Council, a powerful conglomerate, only a few days ago. The man is on the older side, but agility still lingers in his bones, and he has a sharp eye. What makes him most dangerous, however, is the power he holds over the economy in New York and the surrounding area. The Merchant Council, a collection of stock-trained businessmen, is not a worthy group of gentlemen as they so claim. And Alina has no moral issue with killing their leader.

What only bothers her is that if she gets this wrong, if she messes this up, then the Dregs, the assassination group she works for, might fail her, or rather, she would be failing them, and she would be exiled, never too see anyone she grew up with again. That means goodbye to Genya and Zoya, her closest friends, but worst of all, it means harsh rejection from Aleksander Morozov, her mentor. Or as he's known in the Dregs, *the Darkling*, for he moves swiftly and in the shadows of night, and it flock to him, like a moth to a flame. Although Alina supposes that that's not the best analogy for him, is it?

Alina's skillset has always been a little different. She is just as poised as he is, just as calculating. And yet, she has the ability to let herself go, to loosen herself and enjoy the

moment with friends. Aleksander is constantly restrained, like he's hiding something, and sometimes, Alina wonders if he's ever had the luxury to be able to do what she does.

She has been lucky enough to mold her skillset to her persona. She has learned to charm her enemies (though not half as well as Zoya or Genya), and she has learned to be ruthless. Mixed in with the fact that no one ever suspects her under the facade of her innocent personality, they never see the killing blow coming.

But that skill has long been mastered and tested. Alina passed without hesitation from the judges. Her real issue now comes from having to deliver death while hiding in secret, the way people think assassins work in movies. The truth is that they sometimes do, and this is one of those moments.

So Alina cocks her gun, readies it, releasing the safety. With a click, the bullet slides into its chamber, and Alina releases a long breath. The Council leader is in range now, his head perfectly center in her gunsight's red target area.

"Sun Summoner, I repeat, come in!" the voice in her ear says again, this time louder. Gritting her teeth, with only one moment's hesitation, Alina presses her hand to the speech button there. "I've almost got him, sir!"

"No!" It's a more familiar voice on the comm this time, not the old, greasy sound of whoever is examining her. "You must come back! Now!"

"Aleksander—?" But the comm clicks off without warning, cutting off her reply. Alina swears. The man, that swine of the Merchant Council, has moved out of her target range now, disappearing behind the corner. Alina squeezes her eyes shut and sits back on her heels, head pounding with the tight pressure of failure. Well—not exactly that. But she has not been able to accomplish what she came for, and now she's being summoned (*ha!* her mind mocks her) back to headquarters without a chance to prove herself.

"I'm going to kill that man," Alina mutters to herself as she stands, tight black fabric of her clothing shifting around her form easily despite her having been still, tight in a crouch for so long. She's not talking about the Councilman, anymore though.

If the Dregs wanted to reject her prematurely, why hadn't they just done so?

Shaking her head furiously, Alina tucks her gun back into the thick, long coat that is folded a few feet away from her on the roof. She shoves it on with harsh, angry movements and makes her way down the iron-runged ladder of the apartment complex she's atop of, dropping the last few feet roughly onto the street.

Though the flat bottoms of her feet sting at the impact, Alina is quick, and it's not long before she's left the alley and melded into the smooth sunlight of the avenues and intersections of New York City. Still, she's annoyed, now more than ever, since she should have been able to avoid that rocky jump.

Land on the balls of your feet. It's stabler that way, and you won't feel the impact. She can hear Aleksander's voice in her head, practically feel his large hands around her waist as he

steadies her. His touch is sure, and Alina has always loved to lean into it when she stumbles, the both of them lingering with their eyes on each other for just a little too long.

Sighing, Alina pushes the thought from her head. She won't let herself think a soft thought of her mentor for longer than just a moment. She *can't*—not in this industry. Not when she or Aleksander could be killed the next day, instantly without warning, and she already knows that he's not one to put his heart out on a string.

Still, she wonders what would happen if she were to dream a little bigger.

The sun has fallen slightly in the sky when Alina returns to the Dreg's headquarters, infamously called the Crow Club. She is tired from walking about the city all day, but she's had no other choice. It's not like she just has the ability to walk onto the subway with a sharpshooting weapon tucked into her jacket and expect to get away easily. She supposes she could, and she knows that Jesper has done it before, but it's a rare case...and Jesper is *Jesper Fahey*, the sharpshooting legend. Modern legend, anyway. He's younger than Alina, with cheek and sass to rival her own, but he's marvellously skilled with a revolver, and he gets away with it, too. It's crazy, really, especially considering the fact that since he's black, a policeman is likely to pick him out for no reason anyway. Craziness and skill mixed in with a strong dash of luck, then.

Nonetheless, Alina isn't quite ready to take that chance. She'd rather test fate with manipulation, with speed, and even with a sharp blade.

This is all formality.

Aleksander's waiting for her when she returns, his foot tapping impatiently on the smooth tile floor, such a contrast to the even expression on his countenance. "Alina. Why did you take so long?"

"If you guys had wanted me back here so fast, you should have brought me a car to pick me up. Or something," Alina grumbles, shucking off her long coat and folding it over her arm, a practiced, smooth movement. The gun is on full display now, but it doesn't matter—half the people in the Crow Club have one (if not more) as well, tucked inside boots and laid openly upon card tables. There's even someone in the back openly brandishing his matching expensive revolvers.

Oh, she thinks with an internal laugh. *That's Jesper*. Of course it is.

He spots her and grins, but Alina can't find it within herself to smile back. She's still biting her lip in anxiety, and her eyes drift back to Aleksander as she follows him through the crowd to the back room where the leader of the Dregs, the infamous Kaz Brekker, is waiting.

It's weird to see such a young face behind the gilded desk with the poise of someone much older than himself. Kaz has a similar physique and features to Aleksander, but he's so much less refined, for as much as he pretends to be the behind-the-scenes boss of a crime organization, one that specializes in assassinations, no less, he hasn't been able to shake the

reputation of a brute, a man whose hands are soaked in the blood of people he's killed face to face in coldhearted murder. He's the deadliest of them all, and he knows it.

Even more unsettling, however, is the fact that Aleksander could overtake him in an instant, if he wanted to. He'd have the finesse; and he'd have the skill, even if his methods weren't as harsh and brutal. Unlike Kaz, though, her mentor isn't one to flaunt his abilities, and so he plays the part of a dutiful assassin, a wise mentor, and a charismatic member of the Dregs's inner circle. That *is* him, even; it's more than just a role. In fact, Alina's the only one who knows of his hidden power. But he has no reason to want to overtake Kaz, despite the fact that he *can*. Yet.

"Starkova," Kaz says evenly, and Alina almost flinches at the use of her real surname, not her codename. So she narrows her eyes and crosses her arms, refusing to be intimidated. "Getting comfy, Brekker?"

His lips twist sardonically. "As you know, you didn't get to finish your exam."

Alina nods, still unsure of where he's headed. Beside her, Aleksander is stock-still, but his sharp quartz eyes are on *her*, not on Kaz at all. Alina has to keep her own gaze trained on the man in front of her so that she doesn't blush. She's not sure she's doing a good job. When Kaz doesn't continue, she clears her throat. "Sir?"

Kaz sighs. "I...It's complicated. All you need to know is that Hoede isn't on our radar anymore."

Councilman Hoede. The worst of the con artists that call themselves businessmen, their illustrious leader. Alina's target, up until just a few hours ago. Again, despite herself, she feels the sting of resentment. She had been *so close*.

"Why not?" Alina bites out, unable to contain her irritation. "If it's something about my own performance, please just give me—"

"No," he says sharply. "It's not you, Starkova." Kaz pinches the bridge of his nose tightly, and to her left, Aleksander is smiling, just the barest hint of amusement crossing his fine features. It's ridiculously attractive, and Alina almost can't stand him for it. "Please...just don't worry about it."

Alina raises an eyebrow, but for once, she has no witty retort. Kaz looks tired, and it makes him look so much older than the twenty-something or other he is. "So what about me?" she asks quietly.

"You've passed."

"I've—what?"

Kaz laughs, a practiced sound, unnatural and gritty. "You're a full member of the Dregs, Sun Summoner. The Wraith saw you with Hoede. You were about to kill him."

Alina snorts. "That's my job, sir."

He levels her an unimpressed glare. “The point is, if we hadn’t called you in, you would’ve gotten the job done anyways. So congratulations.”

Alina has to bite back a smile. She’s done; all the training, everything. *Done.*

There’s only one problem. “What about—I mean, are Aleksander and I still—?”

“He can discuss that with you,” Kaz says shortly, albeit with a slight grin on his face. “You’re dismissed.”

When they’ve left the room, Alina lets out a barking sort of laugh. “God, I hate the way that he talks, acting like he owns the fucking place.”

“He *does* own the fucking place, Alina,” Aleksander says smoothly, amusement evident in his tone. There’s a smirk on his face, like he knows more than Brekker, and something about his voice makes it hard for her to concentrate on his words, so she’s drawn closer to him. Vaguely, Alina is aware of a large hand around her waist, the other drifting, drifting...

She clears her throat. “So are you still my mentor?”

“In a sense. I mean, we’re on equal footing now. But...”

“But?” Alina echoes. The hallway is empty, leaving them alone in the most tantalizing manner. Appalled by her own daring, Alina presses closer to him, leaving the space between them nonexistent.

With a low moan, Aleksander reciprocates the pressure, and soon, Alina’s back is pressed to the wall harshly, and his large hands are travelling along her body at a rapid pace. She leans into them, adoring the feel of his touch on her breasts as he feels her curves. His lips hover over her jaw and then her lips, lingering above them for a moment before crashing down upon them, fierce and passionate like everything else he does.

She’s wanted this for so long, and by the way he’s kissing her, she can tell he has, too. They’ve felt this in training sessions, when his hands drift to the muscles along her calves and up onto her thighs, slipping between her legs with no hesitation, but ever so slowly, almost as if he was asking for permission. Alina understood why, for his touch was more than that of a helping teacher, a skilled mentor. No, no. He wanted more, and he wants more now. And she’s finally relinquishing that hold.

Alina moans into the kiss as she remembers each time he’s nearly touched her in the most intimate places, and she takes his hand from her hip now, lowering it so that it fits where it’s supposed to be, right at the base of the vee of her leggings, fingers rubbing her through the cloth. “Aleksander— *oh.*”

His touch has taken a mind of its own, now, and Alina gasps as he pulls her into an empty office a few doors down from Kaz’s. It’s a meeting room, most likely used for the Dregs’s inner circle. Alina can practically see Inej, Jesper, and Aleksander sitting around the oval table with Kaz at its head, scheming, as always.

But they're not here; none of them are here except her and Aleksander, and so Alina laughs giddily, the sound coming out muffled from where her face is pressed into the thick black cloth of Aleksander's shoulder.

With a grunt, he throws her onto the table and begins to unbuckle his trousers, those expensive black slacks that could place him among any high-ranking member of society. Alina's the only one who knows who he really is—a commoner playing at royalty, a manipulator to have gotten where he has, and a murderer with a heart of nobility. But she's almost tricked by the facade of finery as he tears off her bottoms, those stretchy black leggings that make it easier for her to jump and run, and her underwear, and the shoes on her feet as well.

"Aleksander, someone could see us," Alina murmurs as he climbs upon her, fingers brushing over her now-bare cunt. She reaches for his wrist, but he's too quick for her, taking her hand in his and pressing them both to his mouth, where he kisses them as if they mean the world. Alina can't help but blush at his beauty, the way his dark lashes rest on his pale cheekbones as he kisses her fingers slowly and then leans forward again to see to her lips, hand free again to wander down to her cunt and press to her clit. She moans against his mouth, and he murmurs something unintelligible, the sounds sending pleasant vibrations through her. "What's that?"

"I've wanted to fuck you like this for so long," he says, pulling away just enough to speak. "Ever since you got assigned to me, I couldn't help but imagine what would happen if you just let me teach you so much more things than how to perfect murder, my Alina."

She groans at his words, unable to keep the sound from her mouth. She was young when he became her mentor, overage, but young still. Though Alina had been living with the Dregs all her life, an orphan from the start, it had only been after she turned eighteen that she was allowed to train to become a true assassin. Now it's been years, years under Aleksander Morozov's wing, and it turns out that his mind has been filthy all along.

"Should I tell you what I wanted to do?" he asks between pants, his erection brushing her leg as he presses her to the table, fingers moving around her clit and dipping down to slide into her. "Should I tell you the depths of how enticing you were to me, you sweet vixen?"

Alina nods fervently, the gesture akin to a sinner repenting, except that this is so wildly reversed. "Please, sir."

She sees him suck in a breath at the title. "Say that again."

Alina grins and dips her chin downwards demurely. "Tell me how you wanted to ravage me, sir. Please, Aleksander."

Smirking, Aleksander dips his head indulgently as if he's granting her some large favor. "I will, then, solnishka." The pet name is sweet on his tongue, as it always has been. Now, it's taken on a whole new meaning. "I saw you with a gun, with a knife, and I would have gladly been your victim," Aleksander continues, breathless as he pumps inside of her with his fingers, creating a soft squelching sound. "You are so wet, my Alina."

“I know,” she says through gritted teeth. Her voice is pitched high, a breathy whine, and with each thrust, she’s forced to buck into his hand. “Aleksander—”

He shushes her with a slight shake of his head. “I’m not finished yet.”

“Get on with it!”

A smile spreads across his lips. “Everytime you charmed a man or woman, I wanted to be them. You wore that beautiful golden dress, remember? It was slightly sheer, and I remember staring intently at your ass as you walked in it.”

She wants to make a witty quip in reply, but she finds that she can’t do anything but beg. “*Oh—Aleksander—please, sir—*”

But he continues slowly, speaking as if nothing is the matter, smirk still evident on his countenance. “And then there was that time you climbed to the top of that rope before any of the others could, your limbs strong and wily as if you were a cheetah, and you beat the rest of your competitors by a full thirty seconds. And I thought, ‘that’s my girl. That’s my Alina.’ *Mine.*” His voice is greedy, tinged with obvious lust, and Alina looks down briefly to see his pretty cock a bright red, pulsing and waiting in agony.

“And then you came down,” Aleksander whispers hoarsely, laden with want. “And I just wanted to take you then and there, regardless of who saw us.”

At that, Alina feels a wave of pleasure run over her. “And you lusted after me all this while?” she asks.

“More than that, solnishka. We’re the future.”

As he says it, his fingers, coated with her wetness, move faster, and Alina cries out, head falling and eyes rolling back with ecstasy as he brings her to her orgasm. “Aleksander, oh, *Aleksander—*”

“Yes,” he murmurs. “I want to hear my name on your lips. Only mine. You understand, little one?”

She can’t respond; she is high from his worship of her body, and is slowly coming down. “Oh, *fuck.*”

“Alina,” he groans, and she realizes that he’s been waiting for her, his free hand priming his erection with gentle caresses. All for her.

“Give it to me,” she moans, gripping his shoulders. “Fuck me, Aleksander.”

He does without a moment’s hesitation, pressing into her cunt slowly and bottoming out with a sigh. “*Alina.* You’re so tight for me, solnishka.”

“Move,” she hisses in his ear.

Finally, he does, pulling out of her and in again with a loud hiss. Alina grinds into him as his shaft presses tightly against her walls, eliciting small moans from her mouth. “You’re divine,” she whispers, clenching around him as he sinks into her again and again and again. “So divine, my Aleksander.”

“As are you,” he pants. Even through the fabric of his shirt, Alina can feel his back muscles moving with power, flexing as he rhythmically pounds into her. “Faster,” she begs him.

And he does. The slow fucking he’s been doing turns to a rough wild chase, a chase from each new high to the next, the two of them racing to the top of the peak of the highest mountain. He’s slamming into her with wild abandon, and she’s clawing at his hair and his collar. His fingers are flying like magic over her clit, dancing in a tight, repetitive circle.

“You’re doing so good, my love,” he says to her, and she almost freezes at the word, but they’re both too in the moment to tell the difference. “Oh, fuck. Alina, my sweet, badass, assassin Alina. My Sun Summoner. My solnishka.”

“I’m going to come,” she moans in reply, interrupting his stream of praises. “Oh, fuck, Aleksander, I’m going to c-come—”

“Come,” he whispers to her, and she does, climaxing for the second time today, this time around Aleksander’s pulsing cock. He follows suit in a few moments with a long groan, spilling into her and collapsing on top of her as they lay sprawled on the table.

Vaguely, she’s aware that she’s sweating.

They lie there for a while, the only sounds their breathing as their hearts begin to slow and return to the normalcy of the world.

“Aleksander?”

“Hmm?”

Alina sighs against his neck. His weight is a comforting presence on top of her, for with everything going down... “What was Kaz talking about?” she asks suddenly.

With their bodies pressed together, Alina can feel his muscles tense palpably. Finally, he replies softly, “Do you really want me to tell you?” She hears the unspoken implication in his tone as well. *Am I sure I want you to know?*

“Yes,” she says. “I want you to stop hiding things from me.”

“Fine.” He shifts himself off of her with a grunt and begins talking as they clean themselves up. “Kaz made a deal with the Merchant Council. There’s a pretty large sum of money to be gained if we get this job done. Whoever participates...it would set them for life.”

“You wouldn’t have to kill anymore,” Alina interjects wistfully.

Aleksander nods. “So obviously, that promise was enough for him to cancel the job to assassinate Hoede.” He pauses there, trousers back on his legs as he stalks toward Alina and

runs his hands over her still-bare thighs. "I'm sorry you had to be caught in the middle of it, my Alina."

"It's not the most terrible thing," she says in reply, "but I do wonder why Kaz has bent to the whims of the Council. He's never been one for capitalism, and he's always revelled in conning them. What changed?"

Aleksander presses his lips together. "We can change it, you know. You and I..."

Alina stares at him, eyes wide, feeling acutely every press of his large hands to her skin, the soft wips of breath as they pass over her face. "What are you saying?" she whispers.

"We can overtake him. I know you know that." His mouth is nuzzling her ear now, but she can hear each word as clear as a gunshot. "Join me, Alina."

She's stunned, and so she says nothing, letting him caress her, seduce her yet again. Aleksander's proclamation comes out of the blue, and though it's not completely unexpected in nature, she's slightly surprised that he wants her. She's only a newly minted assassin, and yet, he places so much trust in her in this moment. She can see it, too, the way he wants this, the intensity of his gaze and the insistent pressure of his touch. "I..."

He looks almost vulnerable then, as if he really does *need* her, and not just as an asset in a grand plan to overthrow Kaz and the Merchant Council, but as *herself*. Alina Starkova, not the Sun Summoner. His eyes whisper a plea.

"Why?" she asks.

He shakes his head like he doesn't understand. "My Alina, I have seen your potential. We can close the distance between learned skill, but the raw talent is there. And since you are not a full member, you have Kaz's trust."

"Kaz trusts no one," Alina counters, and Aleksander nods in concession, lips curled in a small smile. "Yes, that's true," he says. "But you've not given him a reason to distrust you yet. And that puts you at an advantage."

Without her noticing it, his fingers have crept between her bare thighs again, dangerously hovering over her clothed cunt. "Aleksander, please...not again. Can we continue this somewhere else?"

His eyes flash once with impatience, but he nods and steps away, allowing her to replace her leggings. As she does so, his eyes linger on every part of her, gaze roving her figure as if she belongs to him, a prized toy. He licks his lips once as she bends over to grab her bag, and Alina scoffs in response. "So fucking horny."

"Don't lie. You are, too, my darling."

"Maybe so," Alina quips, "but at least I can control myself."

Aleksander twists his lips in a mixture of amusement and displeasure, but says nothing to the contrary.

They leave the room as they found it and slip back past Kaz's office, unnoticed.

The next few days pass without any major significance. Alina embarks on her first solo assassination missions, equipped with a delightful set of knives gifted to her by Inej as a graduation present. Still, she feels Aleksander's typical absence from her side acutely, and has to swallow several times to calm her nerves. She hadn't realized how much she relied on him.

Aside from the daggers, there's a cell phone, wiped blank as per usual, in her small shoulder bag, as well as a pistol, a set of matches, and a few other knick knacks. She's travelling light today, and it works to her advantage. Without a large sharpshooting weapon, she can enter the subway and the bus without suspicion.

All in all, the day passes without consequence; her target is stabbed swiftly and easily as a fresh sip of water, and he barely puts up any protest. This, Alina knows, however, is only the beginning.

When she returns to the Dreg's headquarters, Aleksander is waiting for her, a thin dagger that looks more like a letter opener in his lithe fingers. His other hand holds a simple black holster, inky and embroidered with golden thread. He doesn't look at her as she approaches, simply folds the knife over in his grasp, eyeing it as if it is something that is bound to attack him at any moment.

"It's just a knife," Alina mutters as she approaches, a light laugh in her voice. "What's the matter?"

Aleksander looks up at her, grey eyes unreadable. Quietly, he slips the knife back into its sheath and tucks it into his pocket. "It's a favored weapon of mine," he tells her in a low voice, sounding wistful. "My mother gave it to me."

Alina raises her eyebrows. "You must miss her a lot."

Aleksander nods. "Yes," he said. "She's dead." A pause, a brief moment. "I killed her, actually."

He doesn't sound remorseful, just pensive. Too matter-of-fact for Alina to feel settled, and her skin prickles despite herself. Seeing this, Aleksander places his hands on her shoulders, skimming them down her figure. "It was a long time ago," he mutters, though after the lust for power he's shown in recent days, Alina can't quite believe what he's saying. Still, despite her best interests, she trusts him. And they can't let Kaz hand over the Dregs to the Merchant Council's whims. They must do what must be done.

"Are you planning to...use it?" she asks instead, giving him a furtive look. "To...you know."

He blinks once at her, a mock-innocent smile flitting across his face. "Perhaps."

“I thought we were just taking over the organization. I didn’t think we were going to—” she lowers her voice, “— *kill* him!”

Aleksander gives her a warning look, then pulls her body against his. Her voice is muffled against the soft, thick cloth of his black coat, and inwardly, she glares at him. Still, her sarcasm only works to a certain amount, for now she feels fear, fear of him, the fear she’s pushed down despite every instinct. It’s speeding through her veins like just-crackled lightning, torching both her mind and her body. She wants more of him, and yet now, his true intentions revealed, she’s a little bit terrified. “Trust me, my Alina,” she hears, and then everything goes black.

Her memories come in flashes, harsh and vibrant against the coolness of the darkness surrounding her.

There’s a knife, Aleksander’s knife, pressed to her chin, and she feels a sharp sting hit her skin, a single droplet of blood sliding down her neck. What are you doing? She wants to ask, but her voice has failed her. Behind her, his pale hand caresses her neck, then squeezes, causing her to choke and sputter against the blade. She feels as if she’s failed him, somehow.

She’s falling, then, foot slipping on rocky gravel as she desperately grabs at empty air. “Aleksander!” she screams, hands extending toward him. There’s worry in his gaze as he grasps for her fingers and pulls her up again. This one, she is sure, is only a dream.

Kaz is in the next one, his grating tone easy to place as he paces around her. In a haze, she realizes that she’s tied to a cold metal chair in a place she doesn’t recognize. Someone speaks next to her ear, and she flinches. It’s Inej, her soft voice dangerous and furious as she speaks to Kaz. Her words, however, are indistinguishable. Then there’s the sound of a knife being sharpened, and from there, everything is silent.

Alina wakes with a start, eyes flying open to see bright green wallpaper and a faded, cracked ceiling. She’s on a bed, tied to it, in fact, and there’s the soft drip of a leak in the corner falling into a cheap plastic bucket.

“Hello?” she calls, desperately hoping someone hears her. “Hello, someone please hel—”

She feels something soft and heavy fall over her mouth, a piece of familiar black cloth. This is the gag that she uses on her own victims, a classic among the Dregs. Yet, this one is different. This one smells of Aleksander. Alina screams, struggling against the gag, but it’s being tied around her open mouth now, and she has to stop in order to breathe. It’s an all-to-familiar feeling, but this time, she’s on the receiving end, and she feels the need to vomit rising in her chest.

“Calm yourself, my love.”

Alina stills.

Aleksander steps from behind the bed slowly, not glancing at her face. “Alina,” he says by way of greeting.

She’s infuriated that he won’t meet her sharp glower.

Briefly, she remembers their last moment—him pressing her face to his coat, smothering her, touch as gentle as rain and yet powerful as the subsequent storm. They were going to take down Kaz together, restore the Dregs to what it should be...make a new order for themselves. How had it all gone sour?

Aleksander finally meets her eyes, except, no—these aren’t the eyes of Aleksander Morozov, her mentor. These are the eyes of the Darkling, trained assassin, legendary in his field, bringer of death and darkness. The one their victims fear. There’s only cold stone in the expression he wears, and it sends a chill right to her bone.

“I’m sorry that it has to be this way. You were a liability,” he says, clipped. “It had to be done.”

How? Alina wants to ask him, but she can’t. How was I a liability? I was only there to bring our goal to fruition. I wanted what you wanted.

The Darkling sighs. “It’s really nothing personal,” he continues, and Alina is at least glad that he seems to understand her voiceless plea for explanation. “You were facing doubt, and I couldn’t let that stop me. I still want you, though, if that’s any consolation.”

From nowhere, he leans down and grips her jaw with force, other hand running down the side of her face and tucking a stray strand of lanky brown hair behind her ear. “Are you going to be a good girl and not yell anymore? Then I can take the gag off.”

Hating herself, Alina nods. He’s giving her a warning look, but it’s unnecessary; she doesn’t even have the will to move against him. Despite everything, she still wants to believe that he’s with her unconditionally, that their goals and desires are the same.

The Darkling smiles at her and removes the gag with the utmost softness. “There,” he whispers against her jaw. “Better, Alina?”

She squirms against the bonds that hold her to the bed. She’s painfully aware that she’s flat on her back, and he’s standing above her. Alina whimpers softly.

“Answer my question, solnishka.”

The pet name sounds twisted to her now. “Yes, better, sir,” she finally mumbles.

“What’s that?”

She glares at him, chest rising and falling with anger. “That’s better, sir!”

“That’s what I thought,” the Darkling answers smugly, cupping her cheek gently. He leans down again to kiss her gently on the lips, and despising everything, Alina opens her mouth to him, pressing against his touch.

She has no idea what she wants anymore. And so she lets him continue, sighing as he continues to kiss down her jaw, past the part of her neck that was nicked by his blade, and towards her breasts. He removes her shirt and leggings roughly, hands travelling over her and claiming her as his, and before she knows it, he's on top of her, sliding into her with ease and a low groan. "Alina, Alina...you are too perfect."

"Aleksander," she moans, wishing that she could rake her hands down his back. Her wrists briefly struggle against their bonds before resigning themselves to their fate and lying still again. He bucks into her, doing all the work as his hips snap upon her, each thrust making Alina gasp with pleasure. She can feel the largeness of his cock inside her again, just as she had felt back at headquarters, and the bliss is compounded when he takes his hand to her cunt and presses to her clit, rubbing it with skill. "Alina," he mumbles gruffly, sloppily kissing her mouth. "Fuck, Alina...I didn't want to do this. You were just not complying with what I wanted. What *we* wanted. You betrayed us."

Had she?

He continues to fuck her roughly, not caring to go slow, not caring that the bed they're on is shoddy and cheap, in some random place Alina knows not where. She feels herself begin to peak, and lets out a small whine. "Aleksander—please—"

He stops suddenly, and she feels the breath of his laughter on her cheek. "Aleksander!"

"I want you to beg," he murmurs. "You don't deserve this. You betrayed me."

Again, she cannot remember what he means.

So she begs instead, voice pitching to please him. *Anything* to please him. "Aleksander, please let me come! Please, sir! I'll do whatever you want! Whatever you need!"

His eyes glint with satisfaction, and then he's fucking her again, hands all over her body as he pounds into her and stimulates her clit. "That's my little whore," he mutters, and Alina ashamedly feels a bout of pleasure course through her without warning. She moans, only solidifying his assertion, and her eyes roll back in her head as she climaxes with him, the two of them panting breathlessly.

When his cock jerks inside of her, come spilling into her with a rush, Alina sighs, clenching her cunt around him. "Fuck," she murmurs into his shoulder. "Aleksander..."

"My love," he rasps, falling into the small bed beside her, a long finger sliding into her pussy and wiping up the remains of his seed. He brings it to her mouth, but Alina turns her head away.

He tilts her face back toward him with a rough hand. "You *will* take what I give you, little Alina."

"Alina squeezes her eyes shut, but eventually opens her mouth—or rather, the Darkling pries it open with his come-coated index finger—and she tastes the salty bitterness of it against her

tongue. He grins as her resistance fades, continuing to finger her and bring the remnants of their sex to her lips. Alina licks it from his finger each and every time.

“Good girl,” he tells her when he’s finished. “My good little pet.”

Alina squirms uncomfortably at his words, unwilling, *unwanting* ...

“What do you say?”

Alina stares at him, unsure of what he wants now. “Haven’t I given you enough?”

The Darkling’s grin is slightly sad, but mostly lustful, as he looks into her eyes again. “Yes, solnishka. Now show me your gratefulness.”

Oh, no. Please, not this.

Seeing her obvious horror, the Darkling—Aleksander?—laughs, the sound soft and dangerous. “I’m not going to do *that*,” he mutters incredulously, and Alina visibly relaxes. “I just want a kiss from my darling student,” he says, pressing his mouth to hers again.

She takes him willingly this time, wishing she could enjoy it as much as she wants to. Then he pulls away, looking at her expectantly.

There’s an awkward pause of silence.

“Thank you, sir,” Alina finally mutters gruffly, turning away from him as best she can.

“That’s my good pet,” replies the Darkling.

He leaves her shortly after, and Alina’s left alone again, still confused as to where she is and how it all happened. *Damnit.*

There are voices in her head again.

Alina is back in the room with Kaz and Inej; their voices are clearer this time. “What did he tell you?” asks Kaz, his question sharp. “You must tell us everything.”

There are no bonds tying her to the chair this time, but still the anger in Inej’s voice. “I can’t believe he would betray us!” she hisses, sharpening her knife on a smooth stone. Ah . So that is where the sound came from.

“Morozov is too powerful for his own good,” Kaz snaps in reply. Alina doesn’t think he’s truly mad at Inej, but his irritation is clear. “I shouldn’t have given him so much freedom.”

“I’m glad you came to your senses, Starkova,” Kaz mutters after a moment of strained silence.

She says nothing, only nods. "I...this is my home," she admits. "I couldn't have done anything else but report him. Though it hurt me to do so."

"You don't want to be the one to kill him, then?"

Alina shakes her head. "I can't. Inej should have the honor."

Out of the corner of her eye, Inej exchanges an inside glance with Kaz. "You're dismissed, Alina," he says.

But when she steps outside the room, Aleksander is already there.

Night falls in the ugly, falling-apart bedroom. No one comes to replace her clothing. No one comes to give her food or drink. Alina is parched by morning, her throat painfully absent of any wetness, and she hasn't been able to sleep at all with the awkward metal chains around her wrists and exposure of bare skin to the room's cool temperature.

The morning brings more of the same, and still no Aleksander. She didn't think she could miss him after the events of last night, but she still wants him back. At least he would be *someone* instead of *no one*.

Finally, in the early afternoon, there's a creaking sound behind her. Alina cranes her neck as far as she can look to see a familiar woman with smooth brown skin and black hair in a long braid crawling through the newly-opened window, dressed in the typical clothing of the Dregs. "Inej?" she croaks.

"Hello, Sun Summoner," the Wraith says. "You look terrible."

"No shit, Sherlock," Alina mutters, before collapsing her head onto the mattress again.

"I see that being kidnapped hasn't taken away your sense of sarcasm."

"Never."

Inej laughs softly. "Well, you get to escape now."

They do, with surprisingly few complications. Alina's clothes are in a dirty pile at the foot of the bed, and she puts them on with shame, remembering her own reactions to Aleksander's ministrations the previous evening.

Inej is giving her a soft look when she turns around, but thankfully lacking pity within it. That look enough is to make Alina's heart soften to her own criticism, and she follows Inej through the window without a word.

"What was that room?" she asks through a mouthful of the granola bar Inej has just handed her when they're on the sunny street. "It's not a place that Aleksander would keep."

“You’d be surprised at the randomness of the places we choose to take people. You have done the same, have you not?”

Alina supposes that this is true.

“Thank you for rescuing me,” she says after a moment, taking a swig from Inej’s water bottle.

The corner of Inej’s lips lift at her words. It’s a smile that Alina can’t quite understand. Something between the other woman and Kaz, she is sure. “We have to protect our investments,” Inej says.

The Crow Club is its normal busy self when they return, though a dank mood lies over the assassins in the halls, the gamblers in the main room, and over Kaz when they finally come face-to-face again. “It’s been quite a few days,” he remarks.

Yes, Alina thinks. It certainly has been.

“We’re not sure if you’re working with him, however,” Kaz admits after exchanging a conspicuous glance with Inej. “You came to us about his betrayal, yes, but how can we know that you didn’t just run to him afterwards?”

Alina stares at him, eyes almost popping out of her head. “Excuse me, Brekker?” She doesn’t even know how to follow that.

“With all due respect, Kaz, Alina was chained up and half-starved when I found her,” Inej protests. “She was delirious, too.”

“So how can we trust anything she says?”

Inej levels him a swift glare to match Alina’s. “Are you seriously going to be like this?”

“Are you *that* fucking paranoid?” Alina adds. “If you want to question me again, fine. But let me take a goddamn shower first.”

Slowly, Kaz nods, and later, after she’s clean, she’s taken to a bland room, barren except for a little table and chair. The walls are colorless, the only notable feature a long, steel door that bolts her and Kaz in together.

But before Alina knows it, there’s rope being tied around her wrists, and she’s shoved to the linoleum floor. “You thought you could fool me, Starkova?” Kaz asks in a low voice, the perpetual grating roughness of his cadence somehow amplified. “Don’t think for a second I can’t see past your lies. I don’t even think you realize you’re lying to yourself.”

Alina shudders. Then understanding, cold and final, seeps into her like just-melted ice. Her mind is moving a million miles a second. She must have chosen to work with Aleksander in the end, then. She thinks. She *wishes*.

A cold needle presses into her bicep, and then the hard slaps of Kaz's feet on the linoleum fade away.

The man in the suit is here now, and he's holding her gently, rocking her in his arms. He's familiar; the only thing left to her and her splintered mind. He will take her away, and this will be naught but a dream, a dozen fragments cobbled together to create the story of what she once was—what she is right now.

He presses a cold kiss to her lips, and then they leave.

End Notes

The End!

I debated a lot between extending this to a multichap but ended up settling here...there are still many stories to tell in this AU though, so feel free to let me know if there is a moment with some of the other characters (say, Jesper or Kanej) that would be cool to explore in this AU. Even Darklina pre-exam time or post-the story. I'd love to write more for it!

Comments are always appreciated!!

[tumblr.](#) || [twitter.](#) || [tiktok.](#)

Again, Jordan, a very Happy Holidays to you <3

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!